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Agarwood's Role in Inflammatory-related Conditions: A Systematic Review of Animal Models

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Volume: 25 Issue: 1 Page: 16-29

DOI: 10.31436/imjm.v25i01.2976

Published JAN 2026

Indexed 2026-01-12

Document Type Review

Abstract

Agarwood (Aquilaria spp.) is a resinous wood traditionally used in various medicinal systems across Asia for treating inflammation-related ailments. Despite its longstanding ethnopharmacological use, scientific validation of its anti-inflammatory effects remains fragmented. This scoping review aims to systematically evaluate and synthesize current evidence from animal studies investigating the anti-inflammatory potential of agarwood. A comprehensive literature search was conducted using PubMed, Scopus, and Web of Science. Inclusion criteria focused on original animal studies assessing the anti-inflammatory effects of agarwood extracts, essential oils, or derivatives. Data on study design, animal models, agarwood species, treatment dosage, duration, biomarkers, and outcomes were extracted and summarized narratively due to methodological heterogeneity. Eight studies met inclusion criteria, involving models of inflammation-related conditions such as pain, neuroinflammation, gastrointestinal injury, cancer, and toxicity. Agarwood treatment consistently reduced pro-inflammatory cytokines (e.g., IL-1 beta, IL-6, TNF-alpha), modulated oxidative stress markers (e.g., NO, SOD, GSH), and regulated signalling pathways including NF-kappa B, p38 MAPK, and Nrf2-ARE. Notably, improvements were observed in behavioural and histological outcomes across models, with evidence of dose-dependent effects in several studies. In conclusion, preclinical evidence supports agarwood's broadspectrum anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties across multiple organ systems. These findings provide mechanistic insights and a scientific basis for its traditional use. However, variability in species, extraction methods, and study designs highlights the need for standardised protocols and clinical validation to advance agarwood as a potential therapeutic agent.

Keywords

Author Keywords: agarwood; Aquilaria; anti-inflammation; inflammatory; oxidative; animal model

Keywords Plus: STRESS

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Data availability statement

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request and will be provided in Excel format.

Categories/ Classification

Research Areas: General & Internal Medicine

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ISSN	1823-4631	Journal Citation Indicator ™ (2024)
eISSN	2735-2285	
Current Publisher	INT ISLAMIC UNIV MALAYSIA, KULLIYYAH MEDICINE, JALAN SULTAN AHMAD SHAH, KUANTAN PAHAN 25200, MALAYSIA	
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